

House Resolution 11 - Introduced

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 11

BY GAINES and ABDUL-SAMAD

1 A Resolution acknowledging the 25th Anniversary of the
2 Iowa Juneteenth Observance.

3 WHEREAS, Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration
4 of the end of slavery in the United States and was
5 first celebrated 150 years ago on June 19, 1865,
6 approximately two and one-half years after the signing
7 of the Emancipation Proclamation; and

8 WHEREAS, since its inception, Juneteenth has grown
9 into a cultural treasure that is celebrated both
10 nationally and internationally; and

11 WHEREAS, the Iowa Juneteenth Observance was founded
12 in Des Moines on June 19, 1990, by Mr. Gary Lawson and
13 has been spearheaded since then by Mr. Lawson with
14 the mission of educating Iowans on the history of
15 Juneteenth and preserving Juneteenth history in Iowa
16 for future generations; and

17 WHEREAS, the Iowa Juneteenth Observance highlights
18 the African-American experience in the annals of
19 Iowa history and respects the cultural diversity of
20 Iowa by recognizing the importance of sharing the
21 African-American experience in a manner that promotes
22 a better appreciation for strengthening bonds within
23 the larger community of freedom-loving peoples across
24 the state; and

25 WHEREAS, on April 11, 2002, legislation was signed
26 into law officially recognizing Juneteenth in Iowa and
27 declaring that it be annually observed on the third
28 Saturday in June, with the request that the Governor

1 annually issue a proclamation encouraging individuals
2 and institutions to observe Juneteenth across the
3 state; and

4 WHEREAS, during 2006 and 2007, the Iowa Juneteenth
5 Observance collaborated with various state agencies,
6 businesses, and community-based organizations to raise
7 funds and place Juneteenth history books in public
8 libraries in all 99 Iowa counties, and also made
9 Juneteenth history books available to middle school
10 libraries in school districts across the state; and

11 WHEREAS, during 2007, the Iowa Juneteenth Observance
12 proposed and initiated an ongoing project with the
13 Mid-Iowa Council of Boy Scouts for the purpose of
14 increasing the membership of urban youth in scouting
15 activities, including the issuance of an Iowa
16 Juneteenth Observance Patch which may be earned by Cub
17 Scouts and Boy Scouts; and

18 WHEREAS, from 2009 through 2014 the Iowa Juneteenth
19 Observance coordinated with the Iowa Department of
20 Cultural Affairs to establish a Juneteenth in Iowa
21 museum exhibit at the State Historical Building
22 in order to preserve Juneteenth history in Iowa
23 for future generations, which is currently placed
24 on display during the months of May and June to
25 afford individuals, families, schools, and other
26 community-based institutions across Iowa an opportunity
27 to learn about Juneteenth; and

28 WHEREAS, the Iowa Juneteenth Observance annually
29 recognizes individuals around the state who volunteer
30 to improve communities across Iowa with the Iowa

1 Citizen of the Year Award for extraordinary community
2 volunteerism, the Jesse F. Taylor Award for advocacy
3 for the underrepresented, the Mary McLeod Bethune
4 Award for educator of the year, the James Derham Award
5 for health practitioner of the year, and the Liberty
6 Award for extraordinary work with voter education and
7 registration; and

8 WHEREAS, the Iowa Juneteenth Observance also
9 recognizes individuals and organizations in the state
10 that contribute and sustain music genres created by
11 African Americans, such as the Del "Saxman" Blues
12 Legacy Award, the Tyrone "Rocky" Weston Gospel
13 Legacy Award, and the Ernest "Speck" Redd Jazz Legacy
14 Award; and

15 WHEREAS, the Iowa Juneteenth Observance established
16 a "King and Queen Coronation" in 1992 to demonstrate
17 the importance of family values and community service,
18 with couples nominated from across the state and the
19 selected couple serving a two-year reign to perform
20 as ambassadors of the Iowa Juneteenth Observance at
21 various functions; and

22 WHEREAS, the Iowa Juneteenth "King and Queen
23 Coronation" recently received national recognition for
24 its uniqueness; and

25 WHEREAS, the Iowa Juneteenth Observance recognizes
26 the importance of scholarship, cultural diversity, and
27 community relations, exemplified by an annual essay
28 contest which encourages high school students across
29 the state to write about these underpinnings of a great
30 citizenry; NOW THEREFORE,

1 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
2 That the House of Representatives acknowledges the
3 25th Anniversary of the Iowa Juneteenth Observance and
4 recognizes the significant role of the Iowa Juneteenth
5 Observance in serving as a cultural and historical
6 asset to Iowa's citizens.